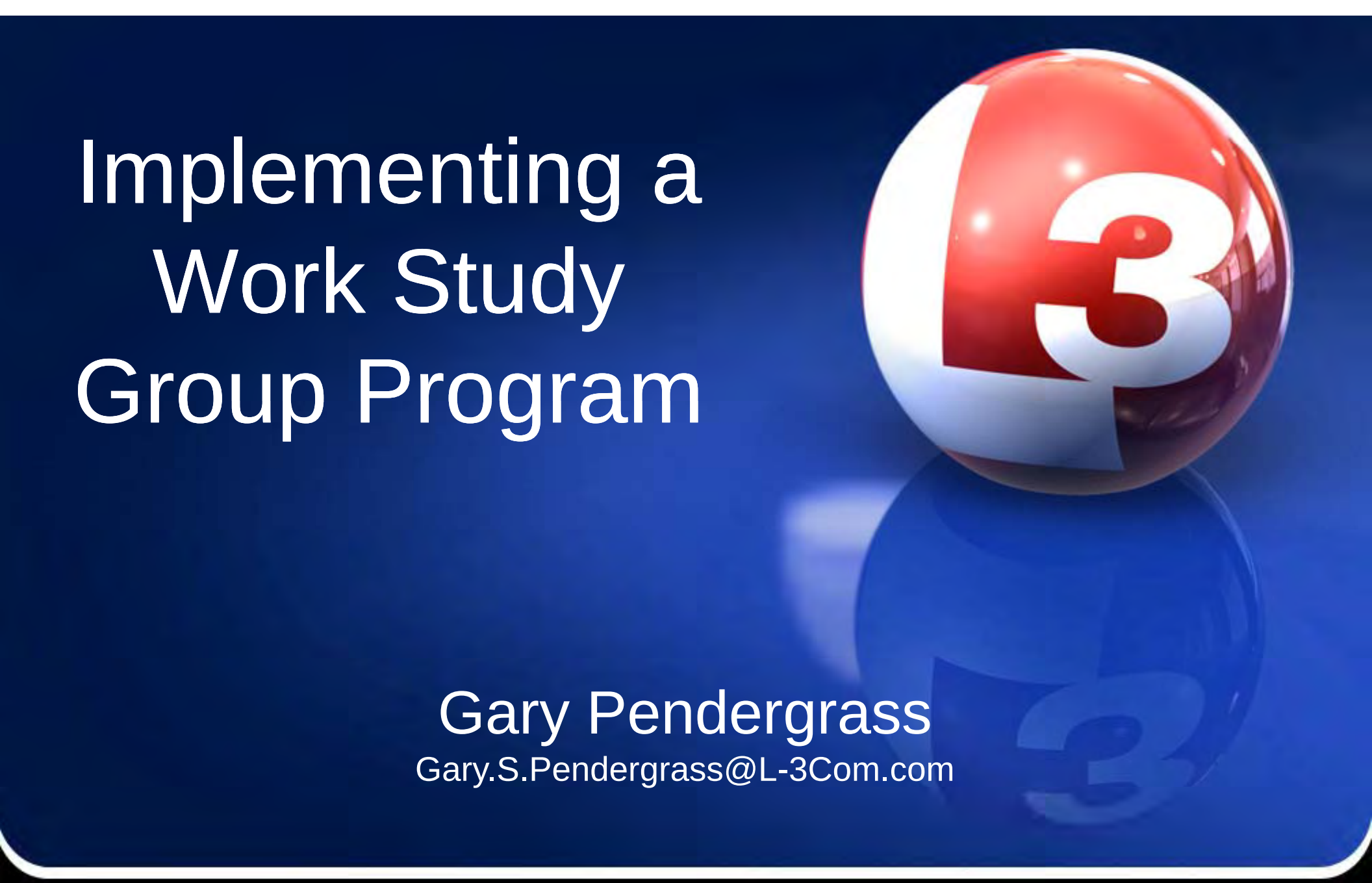
Implementing a Work Study Group Program



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Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

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1. REPORT DATE	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED
APR 2010		**00-00-2010 to 00-00-2010**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
Implementing a Work Study Group Program	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **L 3 Communications Integrated Systems,Mission Integration Division,10001 Jack Finney Blvd ,Greenville,TX,75402**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
Presented at the 22nd Systems and Software Technology Conference (SSTC), 26-29 April 2010, Salt Lake City, UT. Sponsored in part by the USAF. U.S. Government or Federal Rights License

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**30**	

Our Training Dilemma, 1997

- We wanted training in an area not usually offered by the company
- There was no money in the training budget for an additional course
- We wanted to be able to share ideas and discuss how to apply what we were learning to our jobs

Overview

- What Is a Work Study Group
- Benefits of a Work Study Group Program
- How to Start a Work Study Group Program
- The Work Study Group Process
- Tools for Managing a Work Study Group Program

What Is a Work Study Group?

- Group of individuals studying a particular work-related topic
- Subject of their choosing
  - Basis of study is usually a particular book
- Informal, discussion-based study
- Typically meet once a week during lunch

Employees donate their time (participation is voluntary)	The company purchases the book (the book belongs to the employee)

Benefits of a Work Study Group Program

For the Employee

- An opportunity to study a topic of their own choosing
- Gaining the knowledge contained in the study material
- Insights received from their colleagues
- Many employees view Work Study Groups as a company benefit

For the Employer

- A low-cost, supplemental alternative to traditional training
- Employees apply what they have learned to their work environments
- Process or technology improvements often result
- Team building

How to Start a Work Study Group Program

Identify the Work Study Group Champion

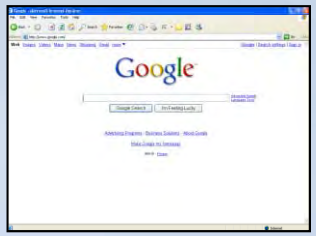
- Serves as the initial coordinator
- Guides the program's growth
- Keeps the program "on the radar screen"

Start Small, Gradually Get Bigger

This helps put the infrastructure in place that will allow you to increase the scope of the program over time

Use Low-cost Alternatives as Necessary

- Magazine articles
- On-line content
- Used books
- Books that employees own but haven't thoroughly explored yet



Show the Benefits

- Hard-to-quantify benefits
  - Employee satisfaction
  - Resultant technology and process improvements
- Cost / benefit analysis

Example ROI Calculation – Per Semester

Cost	$8,000

- Study material costs
  - Average cost per book = $75
  - 100 engineers participate
  - 100 x $75 = $7,500
- Administrative costs
  - Leader training – $100
  - Administrative labor - $400

Benefit	$120,000

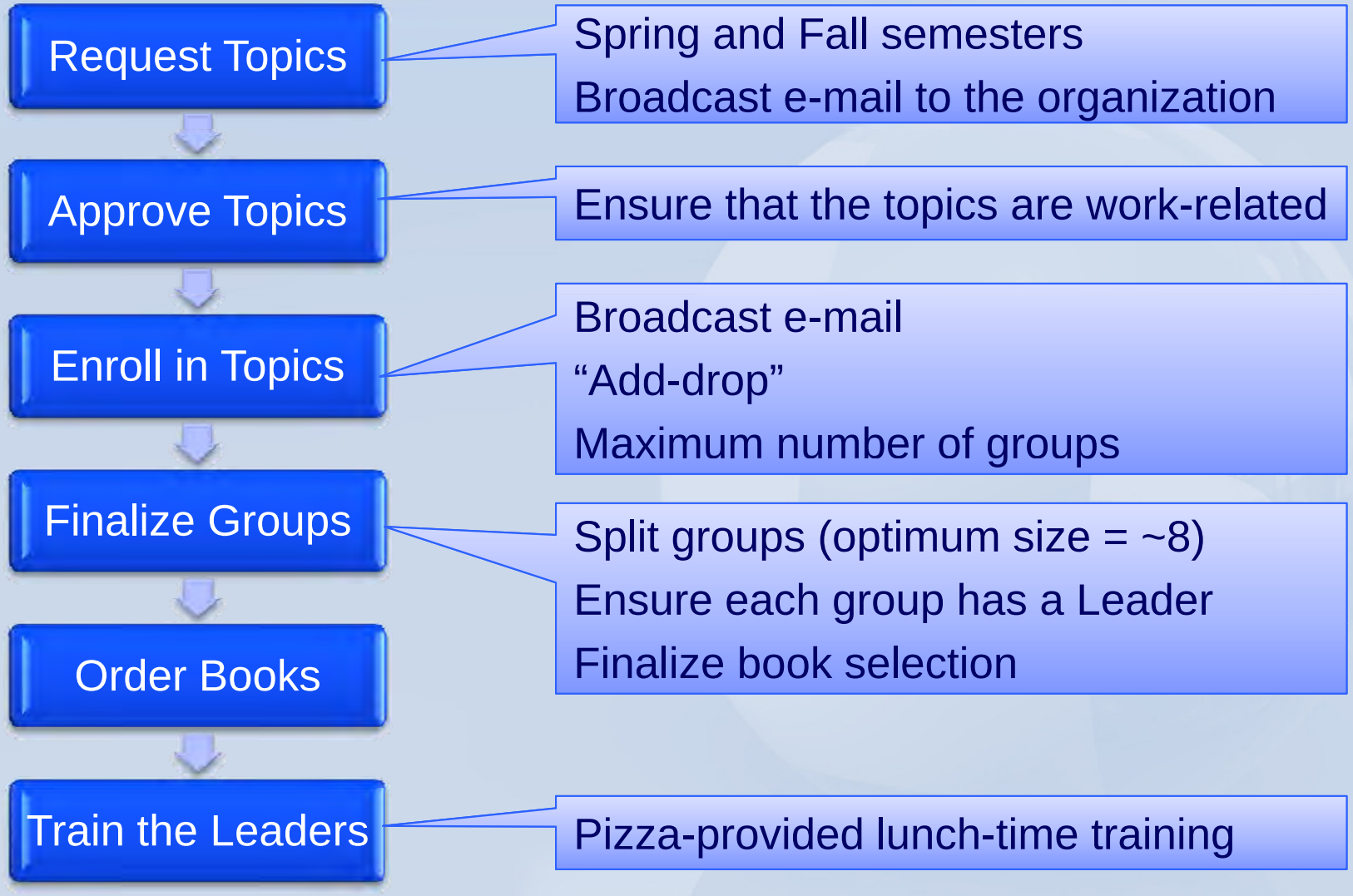
- Uncharged labor
  - Each group meets an average of 8 weeks
  - Each session lasts an average of 1 hour
  - Each person spends 2 hours in preparation
  - 100 eng x 8 weeks x 3 hrs/wk = 2400 hours
  - 2400 hours x $50/eng hour = $120,000 worth of training time

Return on Investment:

$120,000 (benefit) : $8,000 (cost) → 15:1

Work Study Group Process

Forming the Groups



This phase is managed by the WSG Coordinator

Conducting a Work Study Group

This phase is managed by each Work Study Group Leader

Create the Schedule

- Allocate the material to be covered each week
  - Typically about 8 weeks, maximum of 10
    - After too many weeks, members lose interest
  - Possibly leave out certain less-relevant chapters
- Assign Discussion Leader and Recorder
  - Rotating assignments

Date	Discussion Leader	Recorder	Chapters	Pages
Sep 10	Smith	Williams	1-2	30
Sep 17	Miller	Parker	3	18
Sep 24	Jones	Thompson	4-6	38
Oct 1	Williams	Smith	7-9	35
Oct 8	Parker	Miller	10-11	28
Oct 15	Thompson	Jones	12	22
Oct 22	Smith	Williams	13-14	40
Oct 29	Miller	Parker	15	24

Kick-off Activities

- Pass out the books
- Provide the schedule to everyone
- Decide upon a day and time to meet
  - Reserve the meeting place
- Relay participation expectations
  - Everyone has read the material
  - Everyone contributes to the discussion

OPTIONS:

Kick-off Meeting	Virtual Meeting
• The first meeting of the group	• E-mail communication • Members pick up their book at Leader's desk

Discussion Options

- Page-by-page discussion
  - Group members highlight important points
- Presentation
  - Discussion Leader presents a summary
  - More appropriate for larger or complex material

Subject Matter Experts

- Occasionally, you might invite one to provide insight and answer questions
- Some groups have corresponded with the Author and even had him/her in a teleconference at the final session

Meeting Minutes

- Compiled by the Recorder

Content	Reason
Attendees	For providing training credit
Application ideas	Will go in the Improvement Suggestion tracking system and the WSG Report
Lessons learned regarding the WSG process	Will go in the WSG Report

- Very informal
  - Sent via e-mail or placed in a shared drive
  - Usually added to a file that contains minutes from all meetings

Final Session

- Select the potential applications that will be submitted as Improvement Suggestions
- Discuss the usefulness of the source material
- Summarize any Lessons Learned on how to improve the Work Study Group process

Can be in conjunction with the last regular meeting or held as a separate meeting

Work Study Group Report

Content
Number of meetings
Rating of Resource Material 5 – You probably won't find better material 4 – Very good coverage of the subject 3 – Fairly useful 2 – Okay, if you can't find anything better 1 – Avoid at all cost
Improvement Suggestion ID numbers
Suggestions for improving the Work Study Group process
General comments

These are available for general review

Tools for Managing a Work Study Group Program

Written Documentation

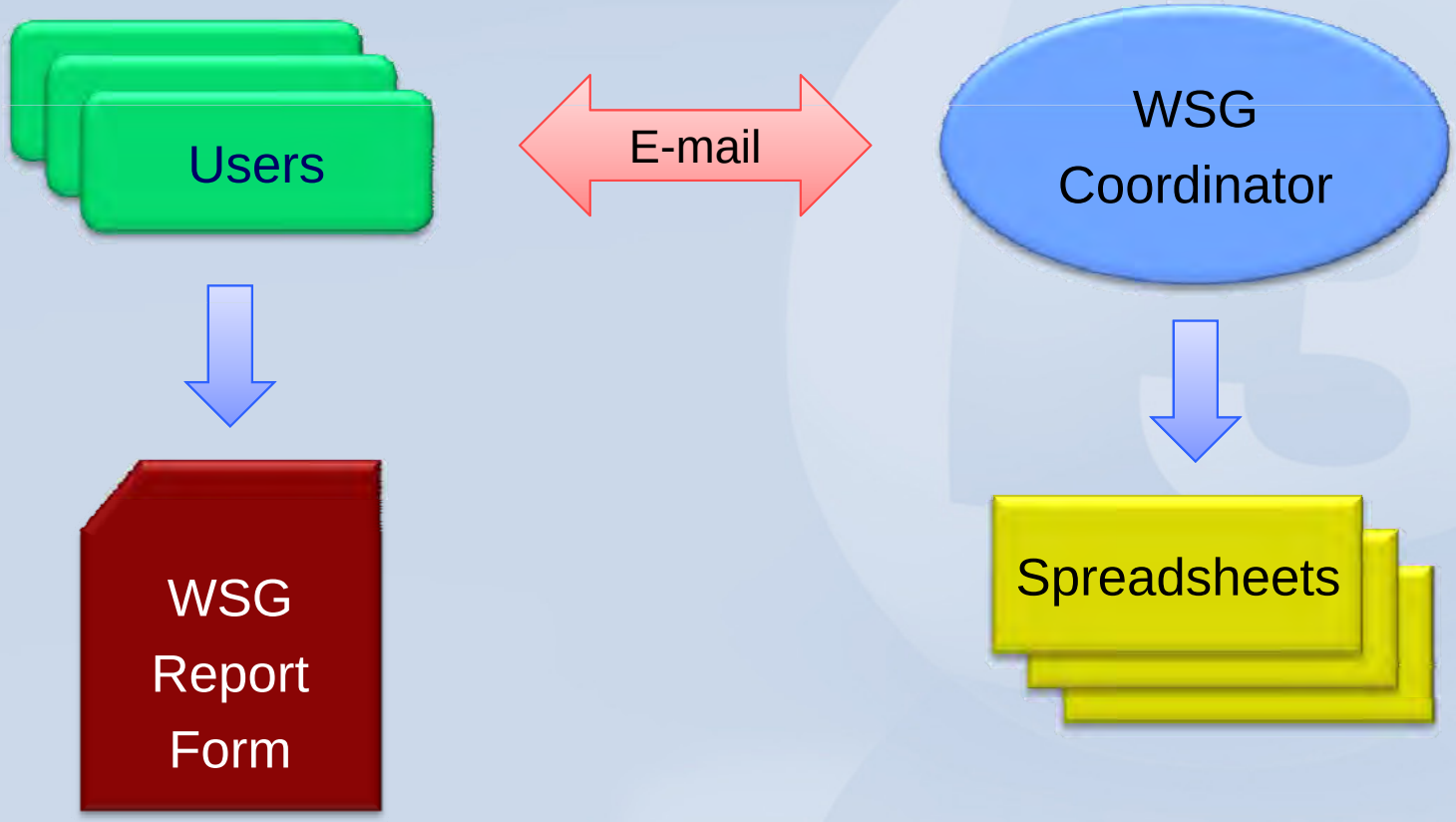
High-level Procedure

- Defines the policies of Work Study Groups
  - Book purchases
  - Group expectations
- Describes the general flow of the Work Study Group process

Work Instruction

- Serves as a checklist to the Work Study Group Coordinator for each semester

Communication & Registration – Ver 1



Communication & Registration – Ver 2

WSG Management Spreadsheets

Proposed Books
Submitter
Site
Topic Name
Description
Comment
Book Title

Sent to the Topic Approvers

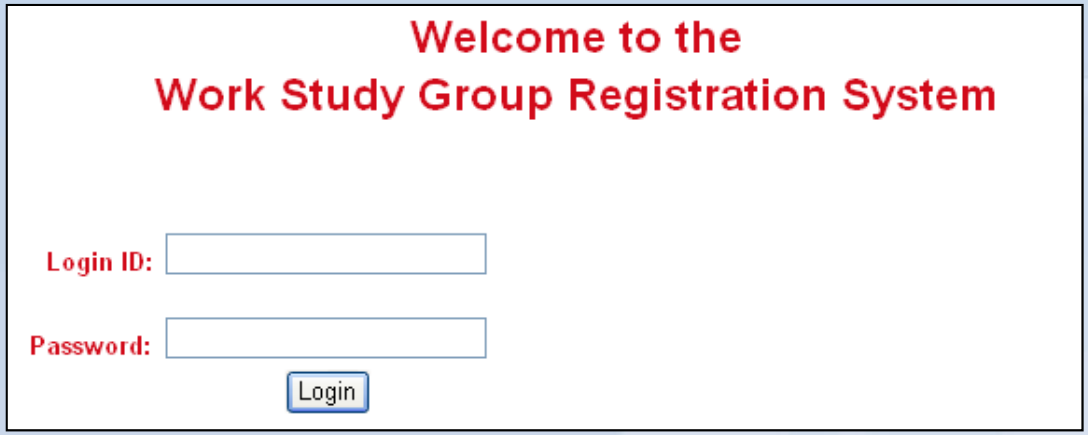
General Management
Topic Name
Site
Leader
List of Group Members
Book Title
Author
ISBN
Cost per Book
Reference Book Information
Total Cost
Group Status (need leader, etc.)

Used by WSGC to manage the process

Book Ordering
Leader
Site
Book Title
Author
ISBN
Number of Copies
Notes

For coordination with the Book Orderer

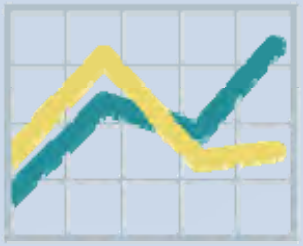
Work Study Group Registration System



Users	Work Study Group Coordinator	Leader Support	Other Administrative
• Submit topics • Enroll • View reports	• Set roles • Allow topic submissions and enrollment • Manage groups	• Document attendance • Submit reports • Request reference book	• Topic approval • Book ordering

Work Study Group Metrics

- Cost
- Participation rates
- Resultant improvement suggestions
- Benefits resulting from the studies



Frequently Asked Questions

- Who pays for the book that we study in the Work Study Group?
- Can I be a part of more than one Work Study Group at a time?
- What is the order of events in the Work Study Group process?
- My project team would like to study a particular book. May we have our own Work Study Group without going through the normal sign-up process?
- What is the minimum number of people required to form a Work Study Group?
- Do I get training credit for participating in a Work Study Group?

Summary

- Work Study Groups can provide an effective supplement to your training program
  - They offer low-cost opportunities for employees to explore high-interest subjects
  - They can be a source of process and technology improvements
- When beginning a Work Study Group Program, start small
  - Build your infrastructure and your case
- Following a structured process facilitates a smooth implementation

Acronyms

Acronym	***Meaning***
ID	Identification
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
ROI	Return on Investment
WSG	Work Study Group
WSGC	Work Study Group Coordinator